

# Mainstreaming of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan: A Theoretical Perspective of Conflict Transformation

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## Abstract

*Since the onset of 21<sup>st</sup> century, Pakistan has witnessed unprecedented waves of terrorism and violent extremism across the country. The nexus between the banned militant outfits and proscribed organizations have shaken the very fabric of our society. In the last two decades, Pakistan has tried to uproot the menace of terrorism through a combination of military operations and negotiations but so far it has not yielded any favorable outcomes. This article tries to find out whether terrorist organizations such as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) could be mainstreamed into a political force. It utilizes the framework of Conflict Transformation Theory that lays out the process through which a conflict-ridden system could be converted into a system of peace and stability. Drawing from historical precedents, where designated terrorist organizations of the time were mainstreamed into their respective national folds and became progressive political parties, the study examines the prospects of mainstreaming terrorist organizations or banned outfits such as the TTP. The article concludes by exploring the future prospects of TTP mainstreaming, standout limitations and foreseeable obstacles for such an eventuality.*

**Keywords:** Conflict Transformation, Political Mainstreaming, Extremism, Terrorism, Banned Outfits, Integration, Political System, TTP.

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## **1. Introduction**

Mainstreaming of banned outfits and terrorist organizations in conflict-ridden regions has been a crucial part of the terrorism discourse. The process typically involves transforming violent groups into legitimate political actors and bringing them into the acceptable folds of society. This study focuses on the case of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) which is a banned outfit and a notorious terrorist group operating in Pakistan for nearly two decades.

Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is a militant group that has long posed a significant threat to the security and stability of Pakistan. It was founded in December 2007 by Baitullah Mehsud as a response to the Pakistani government's military operation against Al-Qaeda in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), a region near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.<sup>1</sup> The group has been responsible for numerous acts of suicide bombings, random killings, kidnappings, targeting military personnel, government employees, media activists, political figures, and most importantly innocent civilians. The TTP's main objectives include;

- i. Waging a war against the Pakistan army
- ii. Expelling Pakistan armed forces from FATA
- iii. Ultimately establishing an Islamic Emirate in Pakistan.

The TTP's Deobandi sectarian orientation and Pashtunwali mindset have had a significant impact on their interpretation of Sharia law and their teachings. Several attempts of negotiations have been made for peace and stability but all of them ended up in failure.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>“National Counterterrorism Center | FTOs,” www.dni.gov (Office of Director of National Intelligence, October 2022), [https://www.dni.gov/nctc/ftos/ttp\\_fto.html](https://www.dni.gov/nctc/ftos/ttp_fto.html).

<sup>2</sup>Stanford University, “FSI | CISAC | MAPPINGMILITANTS CISAC - MMP: Tehrik-i- Taliban Pakistan,” [cisac.fsi.stanford.edu](https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu) (Center for International Security and Cooperation (CISAC), January 2022), [https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/tehrick-i-](https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/tehrick-i-taliban-)

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In 2007, the government-initiated talks with TTP under the leadership of Baitullah Mehsud. The negotiations failed due to the continued terror activities of TTP. In May 2008, a 16-points peace agreement was signed between the TTP and Pakistani authorities and it too failed. In 2009, Swat peace agreement was initiated but it too failed and resulted in the Swat operation.<sup>3</sup> In 2010, the government started talks with TTP again, this time under the leadership of Hakimullah Mehsud. However, the negotiations failed again as TTP continued to carry out attacks during the talks (although it eventually announced a ceasefire but that too was later revoked). Negotiations also began in 2014, but they got suspended without any progressive result. In 2014, after the brutal attack on the Army Public School, the government of Pakistan launched a comprehensive military operation against terrorists "Operation Zarb-e-Azb" in North Waziristan, which led to the killing of a large number of TTP militants. In 2018, the newly-elected government of Pakistan under Prime Minister Imran Khan expressed willingness to hold talks with TTP. The group rejected the offer at the time.<sup>4</sup> In 2019, the government and TTP reportedly held talks, but no progress was made as the TTP continued its attacks across the country.<sup>5</sup> Next year in 2020, talks were initiated with the TTP once again, this time under the leadership of Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud. The then foreign minister Qureshi met with a group of TTP leaders at Islamabad to revive the talks for peace.<sup>6</sup> The talks reportedly focused on a possible ceasefire, but no concrete

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<sup>3</sup>Combating Terrorism Center, "Reviewing Pakistan's Peace Deals with the Taliban," Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, September 26, 2012, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/reviewing-pakistans-peace-deals-with-the-taliban/>.

<sup>4</sup>Ioanna Sakoufaki, "Islamabad in Talks with Groups of Pakistani Taliban, PM Khan Reveals," Islamabad in talks with groups of Pakistani Taliban, PM Khan reveals (TRT World, June 4, 2021), <https://www.trtworld.com/asia/islamabad-in-talks-with-groups-of-pakistani-taliban-pm-khan-reveals-50395>.

<sup>5</sup>Muhammad Amir Rana, "Pakistan's Peace Talks with TTP: Prospective Outcome and Implications," Pak Institute For Peace Studies Pvt Ltd. (PIPS) (Pakistan Institute for Peace studies, July 20, 2022), <https://www.pakpips.com/article/6959>.

<sup>6</sup>Roshan Noorzai, "Pakistan Sees Taliban as Buffer to India in Future Afghanistan, Experts Say," VOA (VOA News, August 28, 2020), <https://www.voanews.com/a/extremism-watch-pakistan-sees-taliban-buffer-india-future-afghanistan-experts-say/6195147.html>.

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agreement was reached. In 2021, the government and TTP reportedly held secret talks in Afghanistan. They were being mediated by the Afghan Taliban and Haqqani network. The talks did not result in any significant breakthroughs.<sup>7</sup> In 2022, the government of Pakistan and TTP engaged in talks once again<sup>8</sup> with the aim of bringing the militant group into the mainstream. However, the talks were suspended after TTP continued its attacks on security forces and civilians.<sup>9</sup>

Despite several attempts at negotiations between TTP and the Pakistani government the group remained outside the national fold. There are many reasons of these failures, which will be discussed in details later in the paper. In addition to the obvious reasons there are certain, internal and external factors, which play a key role in the success or failures of negotiations and contribute towards the idea of mainstreaming.

History has proven that once violent, terrorist organizations and banned outfits can in fact transform into peaceful, progressive and productive national political parties. For example; African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa, Irish Republic Army (IRA) in United Kingdom and Ireland, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in Colombia, Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) in Spain and Red Brigade (Brigate Rosse) in Italy. They all were once terrorist organizations and banned outfits in their respective countries. Later they underwent substantial transformation and were subsequently integrated into mainstream political process. Now, Pakistan has been facing the same situation as it confronts

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<sup>7</sup> Daud Khattak, "Exclusive: Pakistan, Tehrik-e Taliban Hold Secret Talks over Cease-Fire," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, November 4, 2021, sec. Pakistan, <https://www.rferl.org/a/pakistan-tehrik-e-taliban-talks/31544517.html>.

<sup>8</sup> PTI, "Banned TTP, Council of Pakistan Tribal Leaders Reach 3-Month Ceasefire Deal," *The Hindu*, June 4, 2022, sec. World, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/banned-ttp-council-of-pakistan-tribal-leaders-reach-3-month-ceasefire-deal/article65493932.ece>.

<sup>9</sup> Rhea Sinha, "TTP-Pakistan Peace Talks: The Pitfalls and Their Implications," ORF (Observer Research Foundation, August 18, 2022), <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/ttp-pakistan-peace-talks/>.

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a number of banned outfits and terrorist actors that have a range of political aspirations. This paper will utilize the “Conflict Transformation Theory” to discuss the prospects and pitfalls of potential transition of the banned terrorist outfit, Tehrik- e-Taliban Pakistan. It will meticulously analyze the peace talks between the Pakistani authorities and TTP. The reasons for the failure of the talks will be scrutinized and a way forward in light of historical precedents and theoretical assertions will be duly suggested.

## **2. Research objectives**

- i. Following are the main objectives of this research;
- ii. To determine the impact of the negotiations between Pakistan and TTP on regional peace and security.
- iii. To explain how the militant group may transform into a peaceful disarmed group in light of historical case studies.
- iv. To assess the relationship between the state’s objectives and TTP’s goals.
- v. To examine the response of the international community on the peace talks between TTP and Pakistan.
- vi. To measure the strength and potential as mediator of the newly formed Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

## **3. Research Questions**

- i. What were the underlying reasons for the failure of negotiations between the Pakistani government and TTP from 2007 to 2022?
- ii. How did the mainstreaming of once violent organizations such as ANC, Sinn Fein, Red Brigades, and PNV impact their respective nations' peace and security, and can such a strategy be implemented in the case of TTP?

- iii. What are the challenges and opportunities in negotiating with TTP, and how can these be addressed to achieve lasting peace in the region?

#### **4. Main Streaming of TTP**

TTP is a pro-Pashtun, Islamic fundamentalist group that has been fighting against the Pakistan army and government for more than a decade. TTP was formed in 2007 as an umbrella organization of various militant groups that had been operating in Pakistan's tribal areas. Its main goal was to establish a strict Islamic state in Pakistan and to enforce Sharia law. The group initially focused on carrying out attacks against the Pakistani military and government officials, but soon began targeting civilians as well.<sup>10</sup> The TTP has been involved in numerous terrorist activities, including suicide bombings, targeted killings, and kidnappings, resulting in the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians, human rights activists, army officials, journalists, and professionals. In response, the Pakistani government launched a series of counter-military operations against the TTP and other militant groups operating in the country.<sup>11</sup>

The TTP suffered significant losses during the Pakistan Army's series of operations against them during the War on Terror. Operations such as Raah-e-Haq, Black Thunderstorm, Koh-e-safaid, Raah-e-Raast, Zalzala, Raah-e-Nijat, and Zarb-e-Azab have all contributed to the weakening of terrorist organizations in Pakistan since 2007.<sup>12</sup> The most recent operation, Rad-ul-Fassad, also greatly

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<sup>10</sup> "FSI | CISAC | MAPPINGMILITANTS CISAC - MMP: Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan," [cisac.fsi.stanford.edu](https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/tehrick-i-taliban-pakistan#text_block_8839) (Center for International Security and Cooperation (CISAC), January 2022), [https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/tehrick-i-taliban-pakistan#text\\_block\\_8839](https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/tehrick-i-taliban-pakistan#text_block_8839).

<sup>11</sup> "National Counterterrorism Center | FTOs," [www.dni.gov](https://www.dni.gov/nctc/ftos/ttp_fto.html) (Office of Director of National Intelligence, October 2022), [https://www.dni.gov/nctc/ftos/ttp\\_fto.html](https://www.dni.gov/nctc/ftos/ttp_fto.html).

<sup>12</sup> Dr. Waseem Ullah et al., "Critical Analysis of Historical Sacrifices of Pakistan's Army in War against Terrorism," *Elementary Education Online* 20, no. 3 (2021): 2617–25, <https://doi.org/10.17051/ilkonline.2021.03.294>.

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contributed in weakening the force of terrorism in the country.<sup>13</sup> These operations, effectively broke the backbone of terrorist organizations in the country, or so it appeared at the time.

The situation radically began to change after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan and the subsequent Taliban takeover. These developments have given the TTP in Pakistan a renewed sense of confidence, stemming from its safe havens in Taliban controlled Afghanistan and a hope to replicate the Taliban feat in Pakistan. While Pakistan was hoping for an end to the decades long war on terror and the attainment of stability in the country after US withdrawal,<sup>14</sup> the situation however, proved to be quite the contrary. TTP transformed into a new formidable force and their demands became exceedingly aggressive.<sup>15</sup>

Pakistan and the TTP have been engaged in a prolonged conflict that has resulted in significant loss of life and financial resources. It is crucial to resolve these issues through negotiations, if at all feasible, rather than resorting to further conflict. Nearly two decades of constant fighting has failed to yield any positive outcome. It is imperative therefore to explore parallel peaceful alternatives.

This is precisely what the Imran Khan government intended when it initiated formal negotiations with the TTP with the help of the Afghan Taliban.<sup>16</sup> To ensure a smooth process, Pakistan sent a jirga of 50 members to Kabul, including

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<sup>13</sup> Hannah Johnsurd and Fredrick W. Kagan, "Pakistan's Counter-Militant Offensive: Operation Raddul Fasaad," *Critical Threats*, August 25, 2017, <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/pakistans-counter-militant-offensive-operation-raddul-fasaad>.

<sup>14</sup> Tom Hussain, "For Pakistan, the Taliban-US Deal Is an Opportunity for Stability," *www.aljazeera.com* (Al-Jazeera, March 15, 2020), <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2020/3/15/for-pakistan-the-taliban-us-deal-is-an-opportunity-for-stability>.

<sup>15</sup> Asfandyar Mir, "After the Taliban's Takeover: Pakistan's TTP Problem," *United States Institute of Peace*, January 19, 2022, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/01/after-talibans-takeover-pakistans-ttp-problem>.

<sup>16</sup> Al Jazeera, "Afghan Taliban 'Mediating' Talks between Pakistan and TTP," *www.aljazeera.com*, November 15, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/15/afghan-taliban-mediating-pakistan-ttp-talks>.

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prominent figures such as tribal chiefs, elders, representatives from the KP government, a Federal Minister, and former governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mr. Shaukat Ullah Khan. This demonstrated Islamabad's seriousness and commitment to the peace process. The TTP and Pakistan government, as a result of these negotiations confirmed an indefinite ceasefire, which clearly was a positive step towards achieving durable peace.<sup>17</sup>

During negotiations between Pakistan and the TTP, the militant group demanded a number of concessions, including the complete withdrawal of the Pakistan Army from the Federally administered Tribal Area (FATA) to reduce Islamabad's influence, the reversal of the 25th amendment that merged the FATA region into Pakistan's KP province, and acceptance of full control of FATA by the TTP. They also demanded the strict enforcement of sharia law in Malakand, the release of 100 TTP commanders and fighters from Pakistani prisons, and a presidential pardon for key TTP leaders with freedom of movement in Malakand and the Tribal region. Unfortunately, these demands led to a deadlock, and the negotiations ultimately failed to bring about the much-desired peace.<sup>18</sup>

As a gesture of goodwill, the demand of TTP to release the 100 TTP leaders was considered by Pakistan.<sup>19</sup> In addition, Pakistan handed over two influential TTP leaders, Muslim Khan and Mahmood Khan, to the Afghan Taliban as they were mediating the negotiations.<sup>20</sup> Despite these efforts, the negotiations ultimately

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<sup>17</sup> ANI News, "50-Member TTP Jirga to Visit Kabul for Peace Talks with Pakistan," ANI News, May 31, 2022, <https://www.aninews.in/news/world/asia/50-member-ttp-jirga-to-visit-kabul-for-peace-talks-with-pakistan20220531170907/>.

<sup>18</sup> Ismail Khan, "Islamabad, TTP Agree on Indefinite Ceasefire," DAWN.COM, May 31, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1692383/islamabad-ttp-agree-on-indefinite-ceasefire>.

<sup>19</sup> Jamshed Baghwan, "Govt Releases over 100 TTP Prisoners as 'Goodwill Gesture,'" The Express Tribune, November 22, 2021, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2330584/govt-releases-over-100-ttp-prisoners-as-goodwill-gesture>.

<sup>20</sup> Mushtaq Yousafzai, "TTP to Cease Fire as Govt Ready to Release Prisoners," [www.thenews.com.pk](http://www.thenews.com.pk), November 6, 2021, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/906331-ttp-to-cease-fire-as-govt-ready-to-release-prisoners>.



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failed. This, however, was not the first time that the negotiations failed. There is a fairly extensive history of failed negotiations between TTP and Pakistan.<sup>21</sup>

In 2007, the then-government of Pakistan, initiated the first ever talks with TTP in a bid to end the cycle of violence. The dialogue took place in Miranshah, the headquarters of North Waziristan tribal region. This dialogue between the Pakistani government and the TTP failed due to TTP's persistent and uncompromising demands for the enforcement of Sharia law, the release of imprisoned members, and an end to military operations against them.<sup>22</sup> In 2008, a temporary peace pact was signed between the TTP and government of Pakistan. Later however, it too failed. TTP accused the government of not doing enough to prevent the US drone strikes and ended the talks. Additionally, TTP continued with their attacks during the talks, which further undermined the dialogue process.<sup>23</sup>

In 2009, a peace agreement was again signed between the TTP and the Pakistani government in Swat valley- a scenic mountainous region in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan that tragically became the epicenter of terrorist activities. The agreement allowed for the enforcement of Sharia law in the region and the establishment of Islamic courts to settle disputes. The Pakistani military also agreed to withdraw its troops from the region, while the TTP agreed to lay down its arms and halt attacks on security forces and civilians.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Hamid Mir, "Opinion | Why Negotiating with the Pakistani Taliban Is a Terrible Idea," *Washington Post*, July 6, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/07/06/negotiating-ttp-pakistani-taliban-islamabad-terrorists-butcher-of-swat/>.

<sup>22</sup> Arshad Aziz Malik, "Pakistan, TTP Negotiating Seventh Peace Pact," *www.thenews.com.pk* (The News, November 9, 2021), <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/907262-pakistan-ttp-negotiating-seventh-peace-pact>.

<sup>23</sup> Zulfiqar Ali, "Swat Taliban 'Renounce Militancy': Peace Pact Signed with Fazlullah's Men," *DAWN.COM*, May 22, 2008, <https://www.dawn.com/news/303889/swat-taliban-renounce-militancy-peace-pact-signed-with-fazlullah-s-men>.

<sup>24</sup> Abubakar Siddique, "Pakistani Cease-Fire Comes under Fresh Scrutiny," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, April 2, 2009, sec. Features, [https://www.rferl.org/a/Weeks\\_After\\_Peace\\_Deal\\_in\\_Pakistans\\_Restive\\_Swat\\_Valley\\_Terms\\_Still\\_Being\\_Debated/1600765.html](https://www.rferl.org/a/Weeks_After_Peace_Deal_in_Pakistans_Restive_Swat_Valley_Terms_Still_Being_Debated/1600765.html).

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The 2009 peace agreement with TTP was criticized by human rights groups and political parties for being a surrender to the Taliban and their demands. It was also feared that the agreement would provide a safe haven for the TTP to regroup and launch attacks in other parts of Pakistan. Owing to pressures from all sections of society, the government therefore had to withdraw from agreement. Failure of the agreement was additionally also attributed to TTP's unwillingness to disarm and abandon extremist beliefs, as well as internal disagreements during the negotiations.<sup>25</sup> In February 2014, a dialogue was again initiated with the TTP through a committee led by Irfan Siddiqui, a senior aide to the Prime Minister at the time. These negotiations sadly also ended in failure.<sup>26</sup> The main reasons were the lack of consensus among the Pakistani political leadership on the talks, internal divisions of TTP, terrorist attacks by TTP during the negotiations, and the general lack of trust between the two parties. The demands of the TTP were not feasible, such as the release of all its prisoners and the withdrawal of the Pakistani military from FATA. The talks formally ended when TTP violated the ceasefire agreement by carrying out an attack on the Karachi airport, leading to the resumption of military operations against the group.<sup>27</sup> After the deadly Army Public School attack in 2014 that shook the entire nation, the government launched a comprehensive military operation against TTP called "Operation Zarb-e-Azb" in North Waziristan, which led to the killing of a large number of terrorists and greatly hampered the group's operational capability.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Pakistan: Swat Deal Grave Threat to Rights," Human Rights Watch, April 15, 2009, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2009/04/15/pakistan-swat-deal-grave-threat-rights>.

<sup>26</sup> Shahzeb Jilani, "Pakistan Enters Peace Talks with Taliban," *BBC News*, February 6, 2014, sec. Asia, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-26065385>.

<sup>27</sup> Syed Raza Hassan, "Karachi Airport Attack Signals Tactical Shift by Taliban," *Reuters*, June 12, 2014, sec. APAC, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-airport-attack-insight-idUSKBN0EN0ED20140612>.

<sup>28</sup> Ulrich Karock, "DIRECTORATE-GENERAL for EXTERNAL POLICIES POLICY DEPARTMENT at a GLANCE the Peshawar Army Public School Attack: From Nightmare

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In 2018, four years after the APS tragedy, the new Government of Pakistan led by Prime Minister Imran Khan attempted to negotiate with the TTP yet again to find a permanent solution to the problem of militancy and terrorism in the country. The Khan led government reached out to the TTP through a tribal council in North Waziristan, but the rapprochement failed as TTP refused to participate in the talks and continued their attacks on security forces and civilians.<sup>29</sup> In the following year, tribal elders in North Waziristan met with TTP representatives to discuss the possibility and prospects of peace talks. In February 2020, the TTP announced a month-long ceasefire in response to the government's and Tribal elder's peace overtures, but the ceasefire did not lead to formal negotiations and was not extended beyond the initial month.<sup>30</sup>

In August 2021, the TTP claimed responsibility for an attack on Pakistani soldiers in North Waziristan, which resulted in military retaliation. In response to the attack, the Pakistani Government announced that it would not hold any talks with the TTP until it renounced violence.<sup>31</sup> Despite this strong stance, in the early June of 2022, another round of talks, with the help of Afghan Taliban, began in secret between the TTP and Pakistan Government. During these talks TTP announced a complete ceasefire with Islamabad. While the talks lasted several months, they too failed to accomplish anything concrete in the end. Now the question is, what lies ahead? Is war and confrontation the only solution, or should

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to Greater Darkness?" (Strasbourg, France: European Parliament, 2014), [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2014/536429/EXPO\\_ATA%282014%29536429\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2014/536429/EXPO_ATA%282014%29536429_EN.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> Ioanna Sakoufaki, "Islamabad in Talks with Groups of Pakistani Taliban, PM Khan Reveals," Islamabad in talks with groups of Pakistani Taliban, PM Khan reveals (TRT World, June 4, 2021), <https://www.trtworld.com/asia/islamabad-in-talks-with-groups-of-pakistani-taliban-pm-khan-reveals-50395>.

<sup>30</sup> Roshan Noorzai, "Pakistan Sees Taliban as Buffer to India in Future Afghanistan, Experts Say," VOA (VOA News, August 28, 2020), <https://www.voanews.com/a/extremism-watch-pakistan-sees-taliban-buffer-india-future-afghanistan-experts-say/6195147.html>.

<sup>31</sup> Al-Jazeera, "Pakistani Soldiers Killed in Cross Border Fire from Afghanistan," *Al-Jazeera*, August 29, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/29/pakistani-soldiers-killed-in-cross-border-fire-from-afghanistan>.

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we give peaceful negotiations another go? Given that negotiations have been attempted on numerous occasions, is it a folly to persist with this peaceful strategy? Are there any fundamental flaws in our negotiation tactics? If TTP cannot be eliminated with brute force, then is not their integration into the national fold the only option? If that is the case, then how can this goal be achieved? Can mainstreaming of TTP ever be accomplished via peaceful means?

To find answers to the aforementioned questions, the paper will utilize the theoretical framework of Conflict Transformation theory.<sup>32</sup>

#### **5. Theoretical Framework: Conflict Transformation Theory**

Conflict transformation is a theory proposed by Hugh Miall that provides a comprehensive approach to resolving conflicts by transforming the very structures and dynamics that underpin such conflicts. According to Miall, peace builders need to follow the following steps to ensure effective conflict transformation.

To begin with, a **deep analysis** of the conflict is essential to understanding the root causes and dynamics of the conflict. In the case of Pakistan and TTP, the conflict stems from deep-rooted issues such as political exclusion, lack of education, economic disparities, and ideological differences.

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<sup>32</sup> Hugh Miall, "Conflict Transformation: A Multi-Dimensional Task," *Transforming Ethnopolitical Conflict*, 2004, 67–89, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-663-05642-3\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-663-05642-3_4).

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The ideology of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is based on a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam, which seeks to establish Sharia law in Pakistan and rejects democracy and Western influence. The TTP has been responsible for numerous acts of terrorism, including suicide bombings, assassinations, and attacks on military and civilian targets, even on mosques and holy shrines, in pursuit of its ideological goals. The group has also targeted religious minorities, even children and women who do not adhere to its strict interpretation of Islamic law.<sup>33</sup>

On the other hand, Pakistan is an Islamic Republic with a predominantly Muslim population. The country has a constitution, which guarantees that no any law contrary to the basic tenets of Islam can be formulated. It guarantees basic

<sup>33</sup> Institute of South Asian Studies and Iqbal Singh Sevea, "Developing an Ideology: Evolution of the Pakistani Taliban," Nus.edu.sg (National University of Singapore, February 7, 2023), <https://www.isas.nus.edu.sg/papers/developing-an-ideology-evolution-of-the-pakistani-taliban/>.

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rights and freedoms to its citizens and has a complex political system with multiple parties and institutions.<sup>34</sup>

For Pakistan and TTP to be on the same page, a comprehensive approach is required. The root causes of the conflict must be adequately addressed. Both parties need to engage in dialogue and negotiations, with the aim of finding a sustainable solution that is acceptable to all stakeholders. Pakistan could address the grievances of the TTP, including issues related to political representation, economic opportunities, and social justice. TTP, on the other hand, could renounce violence and extremist ideology, and accept the Constitution of Pakistan as the supreme law of the land.

Secondly, **context analysis** is necessary to understand the broader context in which the conflict is taking place. The role of external actors and geopolitical factors should also be taken into account. The conflict between Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Pakistan has its roots in the country's history of political instability, religious extremism, and sectarian violence.<sup>35</sup> Pakistan is a predominantly Muslim country of diverse ethnic and sectarian landscape.<sup>36</sup>

TTP emerged in 2007, when a coalition of militant groups formed to challenge the Pakistani state's authority in the tribal areas along the border with Afghanistan. TTP has carried out numerous attacks against civilians and security forces in Pakistan, with the aim of establishing an Islamic state in the country. The conflict has been fueled by a range of factors, including geopolitical rivalries, external support for militant groups, and socio-economic disparities in the region.

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<sup>34</sup> National Assembly of Pakistan, "THE CONSTITUTION of the ISLAMIC REPUBLIC of PAKISTAN," *National Assembly of Pakistan* (Islamabad, Pakistan: Government of Pakistan, May 31, 2018), [https://na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1549886415\\_632.pdf](https://na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1549886415_632.pdf).

<sup>35</sup> Abid Hussain, "Peshawar Mosque Bombing Survivors Traumatized but Undeterred," *Al-Jazeera*, January 31, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/1/31/never-imagined-pakistans-blast-victims-mourned>.

<sup>36</sup> Veena Kukreja, "Ethnic Diversity, Political Aspirations and State Response: A Case Study of Pakistan," *Indian Journal of Public Administration* 66, no. 1 (March 2020): 28–42, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0019556120906585>.

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The conflict has had significant humanitarian and security implications for Pakistan, with thousands of people killed and displaced by violence.

In order to transform the context so that TTP can be mainstreamed, several important measures must be taken. There should be an increased focus on development and education in the areas where TTP has a stronghold. This would help to address the root causes of militancy, such as poverty and lack of opportunities, which have over the years contributed to the rise of TTP.<sup>37</sup> A comprehensive de-radicalization program should also be launched to address the issue of religious extremism. The program should directly engage the local population and should be run in accordance with the local customs and values. It is crucial to understand that de-radicalization programs are usually seen as alien and believed to have been imported from West, it becomes necessary therefore to devise such programs in light of indigenous beliefs and traditions. Additionally, this program should not just focus on individuals associated with TTP but also the wider population so as to prevent the spread of extremist ideologies in the society.<sup>38</sup> There should also be a sustained effort to improve governance and rule of

law in the country. Pakistan as a whole has long struggled with governance and rule of law, which subsequently creates problems of terrorism and insurgency. Improving the law and order situation in the country would help increase public trust in the government and its ability to provide justice and security.

A clear, consistent, and comprehensive policy on negotiations and engagement with TTP, should be formulated. Constant back and forth, as we have been witnessing for the last two decades, is counter-productive and gravely affects

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<sup>37</sup> Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Muhammad Samrez Salik, "Soft Power in Pakistan," Unipath, June 1, 2021, <https://unipath-magazine.com/soft-power-in-pakistan/>.

<sup>38</sup> Sheharyar Khan, "Disengagement and Deradicalization Programs in Pakistan: A Comparative Analysis," *PAKISTAN JOURNAL of TERRORISM RESEARCH* 03, no. 02 (December 28, 2021): 26–28, <https://nacta.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Disengagement-and-Deradicalization-Programs-in-Pakistan-A-Comparative-Analysis.pdf>.

the negotiation efforts as parties on both sides lose faith in the process. Effective negotiations must involve both carrot and stick approach, offering incentives for those who renounce violence and engage in peaceful activities, while taking strict action against those who continue to carry out violent attacks.

Overall, transforming the TTP conflict would require a concerted effort from the government, civil society, and the international community.

#### **6. Notable Historical Transformation of previously designated Terrorist Outfits**

The transformation of the context played a pivotal role in the mainstreaming of the African National Congress (ANC). The apartheid rule in South Africa was marked by systemic racial discrimination, oppression, and social inequality. In order to liberate the subjugated black majority, the ANC, subsequently emerged to challenge the highly controversial apartheid government.

The 'African National Congress' (ANC) context transformation involved the rise of the anti-apartheid movement, which exerted political, social and military pressure on the apartheid regime to transform and engage in proactive dialogue with an organization they had marked as a terrorist outfit. The release of Nelson Mandela, along with his message of reconciliation and peaceful transition, further altered the context by inspiring hope and garnering worldwide support.<sup>39</sup> These factors allowed the ANC to emerge as a legitimate political force that advocated equality, democracy, and social justice. The dismantling of apartheid laws and the establishment of democratic institutions through negotiations and subsequent democratic elections played a pivotal role in transforming the overall context. This new context provided the ANC with opportunities to engage in the political

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<sup>39</sup> Nelson Mandela Foundation, "Nelson Mandela's Release from Prison: 33 Years on – Nelson Mandela Foundation," [www.nelsonmandela.org](http://www.nelsonmandela.org) (Nelson Mandela Foundation, February 10, 2023), <https://www.nelsonmandela.org/news/entry/nelson-mandelas-release-from-prison-33-years-on>.



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process, forge alliances with other parties, and assume leadership positions within the government.

Through this context transformation, the ANC successfully transitioned from an organization fighting against apartheid to a mainstream political party that advocated democracy, equality, and social justice. This transformation not only marked the end of the brutal apartheid government but also enabled the ANC to actively participate in governance and policy making, address historical injustices, and contribute to the construction of an inclusive and democratic South Africa. Partido Nacionalista Vasco (PNV), which is a Basque nationalist and center-right political party in Spain had similar context of conflict in its history. The Basque conflict was rooted in the historical, cultural, and political context of the Basque region.<sup>40</sup> The PNV's struggle for independence and the ETA's (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, a Basque separatist group in Spain) violent insurgency were deeply intertwined with the identity and aspirations of the Basque people. The context specific analysis helped to identify the underlying causes of the conflict and the grievances of the Basque population.

This allowed the PNV to engage in a political dialogue with the Spanish government and negotiate a peaceful solution. Through the transformation of the political agenda and the creation of new political institutions, the PNV was able to achieve its objectives while staying within the ambit of the Spanish state. The context analysis helped to create a shared understanding of the conflict and paved the way for a peaceful resolution.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> University of Maine and Ariel Bothen, "An Analysis of the Basque Independence Movement and the an Analysis of the Basque Independence Movement and the Political Position of the Basque Country within the Spanish State Political Position of the Basque Country within the Spanish State" (Orono, Maine: The Honors College, 2014), <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1151&context=honors>.

<sup>41</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, "Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) (Spain, Separatists, Euskadi Ta Askatasuna)," Council on Foreign Relations, 2009, <https://www.cfr.org/background/basque-fatherland-and-liberty-eta-spain-separatists-euskadi-ta-askatasuna>.

### **6.1. Agenda transformation**

Agenda transformation is a crucial factor in conflict transformation and making negotiations successful. Agenda transformation aims to alter the issues that are central to the conflict. Agenda transformation was instrumental in the mainstreaming of the African National Congress (ANC). Initially, the ANC focused on dismantling apartheid, achieving political equality, and addressing social and economic injustices. However, as negotiations advanced and the context shifted towards a post-apartheid South Africa, the ANC underwent a significant transformation of its agenda. Through agenda transformation, the ANC over the passage of time learnt to live peacefully with the people that were responsible for the apartheid regime. During the negotiations process, the ANC began to recognize the need to expand its focus beyond the apartheid. This involved shifting from a primary emphasis on resistance and liberation to encompass governance, nation-building, and socio-economic development. The ANC embraced a more inclusive and comprehensive agenda aimed at addressing the challenges of democratic governance, reconciliation, economic inequality, and social transformation.

The agenda transformation of the ANC was driven by the desire to establish a stable and prosperous South Africa that required tackling a wide range of complex issues. The party subsequently adjusted its agenda to include the construction of democratic institutions, the promotion of social cohesion, and the implementation of policies aimed at fostering economic growth and addressing historical inequalities.<sup>42</sup> The ANC's agenda transformation was not only characterized by broadening its focus beyond the apartheid but also by engaging in consultation and dialogue with various other stakeholders. This approach ensured that the party's agenda aligned with the diverse aspirations and needs of the South African society.

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<sup>42</sup>Apartheid Museum, "Negotiating a Settlement – Apartheid Museum," [Apartheidmuseum.org](https://www.apartheidmuseum.org/exhibitions/negotiating-a-settlement), 2021, <https://www.apartheidmuseum.org/exhibitions/negotiating-a-settlement>.

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By expanding its agenda, the ANC positioned itself as a capable governing party that could effectively address the complex challenges faced by the country. This transformation demonstrated the ANC's commitment to a comprehensive and inclusive vision for South Africa's future. It played a pivotal role in the party's mainstreaming as a legitimate political entity and facilitated its transition from a liberation movement to a governing party that continues to shape the socio-political landscape of the South African nation even today. The transformation of the agenda also helped in mainstreaming of Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), a formerly violent extremist group in Colombia. FARC was motivated by the Marxist-Leninist ideology and considered themselves as a violent revolutionary movement.<sup>43</sup>

However, during negotiations, they transformed their agenda from a violent revolution to a peaceful political party willing to participate in the democratic process of Columbia. This transformation helped FARC gain legitimacy, a significant hurdle for a terrorist group to overcome. In 2017, they handed over their weapons to the United Nations and renounced violence. They thus successfully managed to negotiate a peace agreement with the Colombian government, leading to their demobilization and participation in politics.<sup>44</sup> FARC's original agenda focused on overthrowing the Colombian government, establishing a communist state, and expelling foreign influences (in retrospect, their initial demands were not very different from those of TTP). However, after years of negotiations and conflict transformation efforts, FARC's agenda underwent a significant shift towards a more politically-oriented agenda, emphasizing social and economic reforms and

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<sup>43</sup> Centre for International Security and Cooperation, "FSI | CISAC | MAPPING MILITANTS CISAC - MMP: Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)," Stanford.edu (Stanford University, 2019), <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/revolutionary-armed-forces-colombia-farc>.

<sup>44</sup> MAURICIO GARCÍA-DURÁN, "Negotiations with the FARC: 1982-2002 | Conciliation Resources," C-r.org (Conciliation Resources, 2012), <https://www.c-r.org/accord/colombia/negotiations-farc-1982-2002>.

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the rights of marginalized communities. This agenda shift played a crucial role in FARC's eventual mainstreaming and transition into a legitimate political party. Today, FARC is a political party and has representation in the Colombian parliament.<sup>45</sup>

In the case of ongoing conflict between TTP and Pakistan, the agenda of TTP is primarily to enforce their version of Sharia law in Pakistan and overthrow the Pakistani government. They also aim to remove any western influence, which according to them has corrupted the Pakistani society. Their repeated targeting of minorities in the country also suggests that they have serious misconceptions regarding other faiths and belief systems. On the other hand, the agenda of Pakistanis to restore peace and stability in the country, end the vicious cycle of terrorism and violence, and to either eliminate or bring the TTP and its associated militant groups under the umbrella of the state. The government has, on numerous occasions, attempted to achieve this through dialogue and negotiations with the TTP, while also ensuring that the sovereignty and integrity of the country are not compromised. The government also has shown an interest in addressing the socio-economic issues of the regions affected by militancy and extremism, albeit the progress on the front has been painfully slow.

The main point of contention between the TTP and Pakistani state stems from the ideological orientation of the two actors. On the one hand, TTP aims to establish its own version of Sharia law and an Islamic caliphate in Pakistan, whereas Pakistan is a democratic country that follows a constitution and seeks to first and foremost maintain its territorial integrity and sovereignty. The TTP, for instance, wants the reversal of the 25<sup>th</sup> amendment (constitutional amendment for the merger of FATA into KPK). Given the constitution and the nature of Pakistani federation,

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<sup>45</sup> Miguel García-Sánchez and Ryan E. Carlin, "The FARC in the Public Eye: Negotiation, Integration, and Political Participation," *Journal of Politics in Latin America* 12, no. 3 (November 26, 2020): 239–51, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1866802x20970805>.

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the TTP must reconsider this demand, otherwise there will continue to be a deadlock in all future negotiations. For a sovereign country like Pakistan, constitutional breaches and changes by the pressure of terrorist groups would set a precedent that constitution or the law of the land can be rewritten by force of terror and guns. So, it must be reconsidered at all costs because it is one of the major hurdles in the way of peaceful political settlement. TTP also continues to carry out terrorist attacks against civilians and state institutions of Pakistan. Targeting of ordinary civilians and state institutions continue to fracture the relations and stall the peace process between the two actors. Pakistan can address these grievances by creating space for political participation of disgruntled groups such as TTP, once they get mainstreamed. The government will have to invest in developmental projects in the conflict-affected areas, and ensure that the rule of law is upheld and extended to all residents in the region. While the Pakistan army and Pakistani government are already working over development of conflict affected regions,<sup>46</sup> the efforts must be sped up substantially so that it can lay down the necessary groundwork for peaceful negotiations and conflict transformation. TTP can also play a constructive role by acknowledging the sovereignty of the state, renouncing violence, and engaging in dialogue to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict. They must realize that uncompromising confrontation the both the state and the Pakistani people will not take them anywhere and would not accomplish anything fruitful. For them to arrive at this stage, they must first witness the futility of their uncompromising confrontation and the positive initiatives taken by the government in regions where they command the most support (the tribal areas of Pakistan in particular). It is crucial that both sides realize that in order to find common ground, sacrifices and commitment to the cause will be necessary.

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<sup>46</sup> Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Muhammad Samrez Salik, "Soft Power in Pakistan," Unipath, June 1, 2021, <https://unipath-magazine.com/soft-power-in-pakistan/>.

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Transforming conflicting agendas between TTP and Pakistan must be done for the people of the region, the security forces, and the Pakistani society at large. A comprehensive and inclusive approach that seeks to build trust, identify common interests, and find a mutually beneficial solution is the need of the hour. The conflict transformation approach suggests that negotiations must address the underlying grievances of the disgruntled actors. In case of Pakistan and TTP, political exclusion, economic marginalization, and human rights abuses should be focused as agenda of negotiations.

One of the most crucial transformations in any conflict is the actors' own transformation. Such a transformation tends to bring about internal changes within the parties involved in the conflict. The transformation of the actors involved in the conflict played a crucial role in the mainstreaming of ANC. The leadership of the ANC evolved from advocating armed struggle to peaceful negotiations, which ultimately led to the end of apartheid in South Africa.<sup>47</sup> The shift in their approach and willingness to negotiate with the government helped to legitimize their cause and gain international support. In addition, the release of political prisoners and the establishment of democratic elections, helped solidify ANC's position in the political landscape of South Africa. This transformation of the actors involved paved the way for the mainstreaming of ANC.<sup>48</sup>

One key aspect of the actor's transformation was the emergence of new leaders within the ANC. While Nelson Mandela played a pivotal role in the struggle against apartheid, subsequent leaders like Thabo Mbeki and Cyril Ramaphosa brought fresh perspectives and ideas to the forefront. Their contributions were

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<sup>47</sup> Christian Parham, "The Negotiation Tactics of Nelson Mandela," *Global Tides* 15, no. 1 (2021): 1–3, <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1417&context=globaltides>.

<sup>48</sup> ELDRED DE KLERK, "South Africa's Negotiated Transition: Context, Analysis and Evaluation | Conciliation Resources," C-r.org (Conciliation Resources, 2020), <https://www.c-r.org/accord/public-participation/south-africas-negotiated-transition-context-analysis-and-evaluation>.

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instrumental in shaping ANC's evolution into a party focused on governance and national development.<sup>49</sup>

The ANC placed significant emphasis on inclusivity and broad-based participation. The party actively sought to attract members from diverse backgrounds, including individuals from different racial, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds. By prioritizing inclusivity, ANC positioned itself as a representative and inclusive political organization capable of attracting citizens of diverse backgrounds. The transformation of actors within the ANC helped in mainstreaming, showcasing its ability to govern, participate in political processes, and respond to the needs and aspirations of the people. The rise of new leaders and the establishment of a well-structured organizational framework positioned the ANC as a credible and efficient political entity. These internal changes were instrumental in the ANC's successful transition to a mainstream political party.

#### **6.2. Structural transformation**

Structural transformation aims to transform the entire structure of relationships and power distribution in a conflict. The African National Congress (ANC) transitioned from a liberation movement to a mainstream political party through a process of structural transformation. This process involved significant changes to the structure of relationships and power distribution within the conflict, paving the way for the ANC's integration into the national fold. One of the most significant structural transformations was the dismantling of the apartheid regime and the establishment of a democratic system in South Africa.<sup>50</sup>

The ANC played a central role in advocating for and driving this structural change, which allowed for the inclusion of previously marginalized groups and the

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<sup>49</sup> William Mervin Gumede, *Thabo Mbeki and the Battle for the Soul of the ANC* (Cape Town, South Africa: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2013).

<sup>50</sup> Robert Longley, "The End of South African Apartheid," ThoughtCo (ThoughtCo, April 3, 2006), <https://www.thoughtco.com/when-did-apartheid-end-43456>.

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promotion of equality and human rights. The transition from a racially segregated society to a democratic and inclusive one created a favorable environment for the ANC to operate as a mainstream political party.

The establishment of inclusive political institutions and processes was a critical aspect of structural transformation in South Africa. Through negotiations and constitutional reforms, South Africa adopted a multi-party democracy that provided space for the ANC and other political organizations to participate in the political arena. The ANC's involvement in the drafting and implementation of the new constitution further solidified its position as a legitimate political actor.<sup>51</sup> The ANC's engagement with civil society organizations, trade unions, and other interest groups was also a critical aspect of structural transformation in South Africa. By building relationships with these groups, the ANC was able to tap into their expertise and resources to address the challenges facing South Africa.<sup>52</sup> This collaborative approach helped to ensure that the ANC's policies and programs were responsive to the needs of the people. The ANC's engagement with civil society organizations was a key factor in South Africa's successful transition to democracy. The structural transformation of the conflict in South Africa created a new power dynamic in which the African National Congress (ANC) could operate as a mainstream political party. The dismantling of apartheid and the establishment of democratic institutions contributed to the ANC's successful integration into the political landscape of South Africa.<sup>53</sup> The engagement with various stakeholders also played a significant role in this process. This structural transformation enabled

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<sup>51</sup> About South African History Online (SAHO), "The Drafting and Acceptance of the Constitution | South African History Online," [www.sahistory.org.za](http://www.sahistory.org.za) (SAHO), accessed May 28, 2023, <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/drafting-and-acceptance-constitution>.

<sup>52</sup> Kimberly Lanegran, "South Africa's Civic Association Movement: ANC's Ally or Society's 'Watchdog'?" *Shifting Social Movement-Political Party Relations*, *African Studies Review* 38, no. 2 (September 1995): 101, <https://doi.org/10.2307/525319>.

<sup>53</sup> Office of The Historian, U.S. Government., "Milestones: 1989–1992 - Office of the Historian," [State.gov](https://history.state.gov/milestones/1989-1992/apartheid) (United States department of State, 2019), <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1989-1992/apartheid>.



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the ANC to effectively govern and shape policies that promoted social justice, economic development, and nation-building, solidifying its position as a leading political force in the country.

The structural transformation was also manifested clearly in the transformation of the Red Brigades. The group had initially emerged as a radical leftist militant organization in Italy during the 1970s. However, the transformation of the political landscape in Italy during the 1980s, which saw the decline of communism and the rise of democracy, led the Red Brigades to reassess their objectives and strategies. In addition, the group was weakened by the arrests of many of its leaders and members. Many of the arrested members later helped the government's anti-terrorism campaign. The economic provisions and provision of incentives to the marginalized and arrested party members helped in weakening the Red-Brigades and compelled it to reassess its confrontational policies. As a result, the Red Brigades shifted towards a political solution and began to participate in mainstream politics.<sup>54</sup>

The cases of African National Congress (ANC), Sinn Fienn, Red Brigades, PNV, and other previously violent and banned organizations that have now transformed into peaceful and productive national political parties provide valuable insights into how conflicts can be transformed. These transformations have primarily occurred through internal changes in parties or the appearance of new parties, alteration of the agenda of conflict issues, changes in the norms or rules governing a conflict, and the entire structure of relationships and power redistribution in the conflict.

Pakistan should follow such conflict transformational approach to transform its own conflict with TTP. The successful mainstreaming of Tehrik-e-Taliban

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<sup>54</sup> Stanford University and California 94305, "MMP: Red Brigades," [cisac.fsi.stanford.edu](https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu) (Stanford University, July 2018), [https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/red-brigades#\\_edn1](https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/red-brigades#_edn1).

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Pakistan (TTP) into Pakistan's national fold will have significant future prospects. It will not only bring an end to the violence and instability caused by the TTP but also strengthen Pakistan's democratic institutions. Successful mainstreaming provides a platform for the aggrieved parties to voice their grievances through peaceful means, which helps to address the root causes of the conflict. The mainstreaming of TTP will also increase the inclusivity of the political system, which will help to reduce the alienation and marginalization of minorities in Pakistan. It will enhance the country's image in the international community, which will bring economic and diplomatic benefits. However, the success of mainstreaming largely depends on the implementation of the agreed-upon terms and the willingness of both sides to adhere to them, which at the moment appears to be a tall order.

#### **7. Criticism of Conflict Transformation**

John Paul Lederach has criticized the field of conflict transformation for being too focused on the individual and interpersonal levels of conflict, and for neglecting the structural and systemic factors that contribute to conflict. In his book, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, Lederach argues that conflict transformation must be "grounded in a comprehensive understanding of the sources of conflict and the dynamics of peacebuilding." He also argues that conflict transformation must be "long-term, holistic, and inclusive".<sup>55</sup>

Lederach's criticism has been echoed by other scholars as well. David Bloomfield and Mary B. Anderson are standout examples. Bloomfield has argued that the field of conflict transformation is often "too optimistic about the potential for peace" and that it "fails to take into account the realities of power and

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<sup>55</sup> John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace : Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, Dc: United States Institute Of Peace Press, 2010).

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violence".<sup>56</sup> Anderson has argued that the field of conflict transformation is often "too focused on the short-term goal of ending violence" and that it "neglects the long-term goal of building sustainable peace".<sup>57</sup> Conflict transformation theory has had its fair share of criticism. It is often seen as overly idealistic, assuming that all parties involved in a conflict are willing to engage in constructive dialogue and genuinely motivated to seek a peaceful solution. However, this assumption does not always hold true, as some parties may be driven by power, greed, or a desire for revenge, rendering peaceful resolutions unlikely.

It is also argued that conflict transformation theory is excessively complex. Its effective implementation requires a high level of skill and expertise, particularly in situations characterized by deep-seated grievances or a history of violence. Navigating such complexities can pose significant challenges. There is also criticism that Conflict transformation theory is usually not very effective. In certain cases, it may fail to prevent violence or achieve long-lasting peace, especially when major power imbalances exist or when a lack of trust persists among the conflicting parties. Additional criticisms of conflict transformation theory include its reliance on Western values and assumptions, which may not be universally applicable across different cultures. Implementing conflict transformation approaches can prove challenging in contexts where trust is lacking or where a history of violence hampers progress. The process itself is believed to be time-consuming and financially demanding.

Despite these criticisms, conflict transformation theory remains an important and valuable tool in the realm of peacebuilding. This is not only due to lack of other alternatives, but because it provides an effective framework for addressing the root

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<sup>56</sup> Rick Wallace, "Book Review: 'Social Change and Conflict Transformation,'" *Journal of Peace, Conflict and Development* 12, no. 12 (2008), [https://www.bradford.ac.uk/library/library-resources/journal-of-peace-conflict-and-development/Book-Review-on-Berghof\\_Rick-Wallace.pdf](https://www.bradford.ac.uk/library/library-resources/journal-of-peace-conflict-and-development/Book-Review-on-Berghof_Rick-Wallace.pdf).

<sup>57</sup> Mary B Anderson, *Do No Harm : How Aid Can Support Peace-or War* (2023; repr., Boulder, Colo. ; London: Lynne Rienner, 1999).

causes of conflicts and provides a roadmap for a peaceful future. Achieving lasting peace will perhaps always be a challenging endeavor, even when parties involved in the conflict manage to reach an agreement. There is no guarantee that the peace will endure, particularly if the root causes of the conflict remain unresolved. An illustrative case is the enduring conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians, which has persisted for decades. The conflict's underlying causes, such as the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, have yet to be effectively addressed.

Securing the participation of all parties can pose significant difficulties. In certain instances, one or more parties may be unwilling to engage in conflict transformation efforts. It will make it more arduous to achieve agreement or sustainable peace. An example is the terrorist group known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which has consistently rejected peace talks and shown no interest in negotiations. The process of conflict transformation can be protracted and resource-intensive. It may take years, or even decades, to realize lasting peace, demanding substantial commitment from both the conflicting parties and the international community. The conflict in Northern Ireland is a testament to this. It required extensive negotiations and peacebuilding efforts spanning many decades before a lasting peace was eventually attained through the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Notwithstanding the many challenges, conflict transformation remains an effective approach to address conflicts and foster peace. While acknowledging its limitations, it is crucial to also recognize the immense potential and scope of conflict transformation theory.

## **8. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the conflict transformation theory has the potential to mainstream the likes of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) into the national fold. Examination of past negotiations and rigorous analysis of the multifaceted internal and external factors influencing the conflict can guide future negotiations and help in the desired

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transformation of TTP. Effective conflict transformation must take into account the external factors during the negotiation process. International support can play a crucial role, as the involvement of the international community can provide financial, logistical, and diplomatic assistance, thereby bolstering the prospects of a negotiated settlement. Since the activities of TTP tend to transcend national boundaries, it is crucial to also take note of regional political landscape. Working closely with the Afghan Taliban, who have actively played the role of mediator between the Pakistan government and TTP, will be of vital importance. Amidst all this, the role of military pressure cannot be ignored, as it can help create an environment conducive to negotiations. However, it is important to recognize that military pressure alone is insufficient; it must be accompanied by genuine political will on the part of the Pakistani government to make concessions and work collaboratively with the TTP.

Political instability within the Pakistani government, coupled with economic challenges also complicates the negotiations. Economic stability in the country is therefore a prerequisite for effective negotiations. Alongside economic stability, the Pakistani state must also persist with its counter violent extremism initiatives. Religious intolerance forms the core of TTP ideology. Effective CVE policies can substantially fracture the appeal of this ideology and create ground conducive for peaceful and tolerant negotiations. The case studies of previously banned and terrorist organizations, such as the African National Congress (ANC), Sinn Féin, PNV and the Red Brigades highlight the potential for successful transformation and mainstreaming of violent disgruntled actors through negotiations. These cases demonstrate that with time, perseverance, and genuine commitment from all parties involved, even deeply entrenched conflicts can be resolved.

It is essential to acknowledge that the TTP case presents its unique challenges. Given its complex nature and long history of violence, attaining a successful peace process will demand persistent efforts, patience, and unwavering

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dedication. Nevertheless, the potential benefits of a successful peace process outweigh the challenges, making it imperative to continue striving for its realization. As further research and dialogue unfold, it is crucial to refine and adapt strategies based on the evolving dynamics of the conflict. The lessons learned from both successes and failures in conflict transformation should inform all future endeavors.